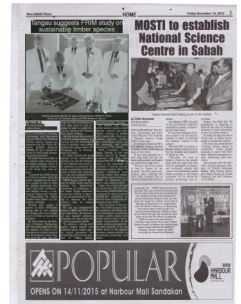


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## Tangau suggests FRIM study on sustainable timber species

By **PAUL MU**  
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**KOTA KINABALU:** Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Wilfred Madius Tangau has proposed that the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) set up a special division to solely study the acacia mangium species.

He made the call as there is no specific study being done on acacia mangium which is an important timber resource in the South East Asia region.

"I propose that FRIM set up a division to solely study the acacia mangium as we don't have a place to refer to when the species experiences diseases and other problems," said Madius during a workshop on "Technology Transfer on Value-adding the Acacia Lumber from Sabah" at a hotel here yesterday.

Besides that, acacia is known to have difficulties drying due to wet pockets developing, and more studies need to be done to find out its problem.

He also called on the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) and the industry to forge a collaboration to conduct research and development where they can share the same data and come up with a conclusion as both sides need to work together in order to move for-

ward by adopting the National Blue Ocean Strategy.

And the timber-based sector is set to be a sunrise industry by moving into the downstream areas to produce value-added products by using science and technology in its development, he added.

In order to boost the production of the value-added products, he said the shortage of raw materials also needs to be addressed as presently the market contribution from this sector in Sabah still remained at 13 per cent compared to 60 per cent in the peninsula.

FRIM deputy director-general Dr Rahim Sudin said the institute has successfully transferred its technology to the Sabah Timber Industries Association (STIA) to develop an optimal method of drying to improve the mill turnover time for acacia mangium.

He said the collaboration between FRIM and STIA has also established a drying manual and standard operating procedure for the processing of acacia mangium lumber.

"In addition, a drying mill quality control manual was produced which entails quality control procedures for monitoring of kiln drying process to ensure quality kiln-dried lumber," he said.

He assured that FRIM would always improve itself through research and innovation, working in tandem with stakeholders from government agencies, forestry and wood-based sectors for the economic and social well-being of the country.

STIA president Datuk James Hwang in his text speech read by its treasurer-general Tan Peng Juan thanked MOSTI for allocating funds to the association to complete a research and development project called "To develop commercial truck flooring boards from plantation-grown acacia resource in Sabah" on September 2015 after it was started in 2013.

Under the project, he said six milestones and 24 activities costing RM650,000 were completed besides a grant of RM500,000 contributed by MOSTI under Community Innovation Fund project (CIF).

"The initiation of the project was timely as acacia timber producers are facing various challenges to consistently produce quality acacia sawn timber, mainly due to the inherent characteristics of the timber, and the prolonged drying time required to dry the timber down to the targeted moisture content suitable for downstream processing," said James.

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Madius (seated) signing the acacia drying manual whilst Dr Rahim (left) and Tan (second right) and STIA members look on.